

# Women to climb the career ladder with £650 training grant

Women interested in furthering their career in agriculture by enhancing their skills are able to receive up to £650 in the form of a training grant. Agriculture is one of eight environmental and land-based industries where women are under-represented in the workplace. Seeking to redress the balance, Lantra is leading the latest, government-backed, Women and Work Sector Pathways Initiative.

Maureen Ling, whose husband and son farm near Palgrave in Suffolk, says Women and Work has enabled her to learn new skills on the computer and to use the Internet to increase efficiency and profits on their 700-acre dairy and arable farm, The Rookery. The intensive training she received from the scheme has also enabled her to give new impetus to her thriving B&B business on the family farm by developing and improving an online website to attract more holiday makers.

Neil Ridley, from Otley College near Ipswich, who is one of Suffolk's skills coaches for the programme, went to The Rookery for a face-to-face meeting with Mrs Ling to assess her skills and discuss how the project could help her. Together they decided that she needed advanced training to allow her to keep up with Britain's rapid move towards computer farming.

"And I haven't looked back since then" said Mrs Ling, who described how she and Mr Ridley had worked together to identify exactly what she required and then she found a local computer expert to provide the advanced training at times that fitted in with her busy farm schedule.

If you are self-employed or working full or part-time in a land-based industry and would like more information about Women and Work contact Lantra Connect **Tel** 0845 707 8007, **Email** connect@lantra.co.uk **Web** www.lantra.co.uk/WomenandWork.



Mike Appleyard, regional partnership manager, with two grant recipients

# Producers for Profit

Business improvement through staff development

April 2009

## Pig Producer Nuffield Scholarships

The pig industry came up trumps in the 2009 Nuffield Farming Scholarship award, with two members of the industry receiving awards. Both Richard Hooper and Andrew Freemantle impressed the judges with their projects and plans and will shortly be setting out to see other countries' practices first hand and bring ideas back with them to benefit the UK pig industry.

Richard was awarded the new BPEX/Merial sponsored award. He currently runs the livestock units at Harper Adams University College and will be using this opportunity to investigate the recruitment, training and retention of quality staff in the pig industry.



"One of the greatest assets of the pig industry is the quality of its staff. With an industry that has been in decline for a number of years, there should be a pool of skilled staff available, but what has happened to them and why are we not utilising them?" As part of the scholarship Richard will be spending eight weeks visiting a number of countries around the world, including the USA, Canada, Denmark and Holland. In addition to looking at how other countries retain their staff, he will also visit other industries to see what can be successfully transferred into the pig industry.

Andrew Freemantle, farmer and shop owner, secured the John Oldacre Foundation Award with his project which will investigate the possibility of introducing a fair trade system for British agriculture.

## Train to Gain

Train to Gain is the national skills service that supports employers to improve the skills of employees as a route to improving business performance.

skills broker will help access this support. Lantra, the Sector Skills Councils for the environmental and land based sector, have been invited to develop a Sector Compact.

Organising and implementing training can be challenging and time-consuming so why not make use of your local skills broker? Skills brokers identify training and skills strategies that will drive businesses forward. They will identify reliable training providers and, if appropriate, source local providers who can work on site.

Compact. This Compact is designed to tailor a more sector-specific approach to Train to Gain, aiming to support hard-to-reach micro businesses.

There is a specific aim to increase the numbers of smaller, sector specific, qualifications that can be eligible for funding, support for leadership and management for those businesses employing fewer than five people.

Considerable support is available to help finance training, or there are offers of additional advice. If the business is eligible for partial or full funding or subsidies, the

For more information contact Madge Moore **Tel** 02476 858402

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### In this issue



Fawley Management training



Practical learning with the VLA



£650 training grants up for grabs

### Plus:

- Leadership development
- Gilt management
- Improve the performance of 2nd parity sows
- In Brief...

## In Brief...

### Polish work instructions

A selection of the BPEX work instructions have now been translated into Polish. They can be downloaded from the website (<http://www.bpex.org.uk/publications/WorkInstructions.aspx>) or if you don't have a printer contact BPEX who will happily send a set out to you. **Tel** 01908 844734 **Email** kt@bpex.org.uk.

### RDPE funding progress

BPEX has secured funding for skills development in five regions so far, for activities such as Pig Discussion Groups, producer clubs, farm walks, health meetings, management courses, Certificates of Competence training and trips to the VLA. To benefit from this funding contact Tess Howe. **Tel** 07779 321078 **Email** tess.howe@bpex.org.uk.

### False economy?

Cutting your training budget may seem sensible when times are hard, but doing so could actually have a negative impact on your business. Recent research suggests that companies which do not train staff are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those that do. Can you really afford to take the risk?

If you would like more information about staff development, or have an article for the newsletter, contact Miriam Drewett: 01908 844749 or kt@bpex.org.uk



Producers for Profit April 2009





# Leadership Development Programme

In 2008 BPEX part-funded Nick Green, of Alvis Bros, to participate in the IAgM Leadership Development Programme. Nick has been involved in agriculture his entire working life, but having held a senior management post for 16 years he felt he needed to take a step back from his day-to-day activities and assess what he could do to develop as a person, to benefit the business and wider industry.

Nick had three specific objectives at the start of the programme:

- ~ To manage his time more effectively
- ~ To be better equipped to deal with the media
- ~ To extend and expand his networks

Now he has completed the programme Nick feels he has achieved his objectives. He has better control over his work environment, resulting in improved output. He has put his public speaking techniques to good use and confidently chairs meetings, and through visiting Brussels he has extended his network of contacts.

The IAgM Leadership Development Programme is run bi-annually and is open to those engaged in agriculture and allied industries. The course aims to develop delegates' skills and abilities to better equip them for public office or as sector leaders. The next programme starts in February 2010 and applications must be submitted by June 2009.

The course is run over three separate weeks. Each week has clear objectives and covers various topics including the management of Human Resources, Risk, Change and Research, Interaction with the media, PR and Advertising, Brussels and its operation and similarly the UK Government. Further details can be found on [www.iagrm.org.uk](http://www.iagrm.org.uk)

## Fawley Management Training Scheme

A scheme for developing new farm managers has been established within the Fawley Farms pyramid with commitment from BOCM Pauls, PIC and Larkmead Vet group. Along with BPEX and Fawley Farms production manager, Terry Ledbury, a programme of events has been agreed to ensure the developing managers will get as much information as possible from the days.

The scheme is designed to provide candidates with the background to products from places such as mills and AI studs, either via site visits or virtual tours. Jennie Batt from Larkmead Vets has also put together a programme of events that will ensure a good knowledge base for herd health, assurance and legislation. The developing managers will also visit different units within the Fawley Farms pyramid and, in the latter part of the year, gain insight to the nursery and finishing sites. The programme will conclude with a trip to an abattoir.

In addition to these activities, BPEX will organise some staff training events to start a knowledge base of managing staff, another huge element of being a unit manager.

If you think your business would benefit from developing such a scheme contact Helen Thoday  
Tel 07973 701 202 Email [helen.thoday@bpex.org.uk](mailto:helen.thoday@bpex.org.uk).



## Post-mortem day

This was a workshop with a difference!

Producers attending the day, organised by Lis Ravn (BPEX) and Ben Strugnell (VLA), were invited to bring (dead) pigs of any age/size along to the VLA at Thirsk to observe some post-mortem examinations and learn how they can assist in identifying causes of death. Some of the issues discovered during the day included:

“We never thought we'd have the problems we found!” Producer

- Hip joint lesions, preventing the animal from competing for food and losing condition as a result
- A blocked urinary tract, causing the bladder to burst
- Mulberry heart disease
- Pericarditis
- A leg bone deformity, resulting from an old fracture, preventing the animal from competing for food



Those present found the day very informative and were encouraged to use the VLA service more in the future, especially since some of the producers had no idea that their unit was affected by some of the problems which were brought to light!

## Gilt Management Workshops

A series of gilt management workshops have been presented over the last few months by Angela Cliff and Pinder Gill. Participants were encouraged to think about herd structure and the implications of not having gilts available for service at the required time.

Some points considered included:

- Homebred vs. purchased gilts
- Rearing
- Introducing gilts into the herd
- Isolation and acclimatisation periods
- Stimulating puberty

The main focus of the workshops was how gilt retention could be improved. This is especially important as the payback for each gilt introduced to the herd is typically between three to four parities. Research from Stotfold which examined how rearing strategies and nutritional management through early life can affect gilt longevity was also discussed. The key messages are that 'fitness not fatness' is crucial and that body condition should be maintained at three throughout the lifetime of the sow. For more information on condition scoring see *Action for Productivity 20*.

## Improving the performance of the 2<sup>nd</sup> parity sow

Another workshop organised by BPEX addressed three key areas of improving the performance of second parity sows. These were:

- Understanding the young sow (first to second litter) and the stressors she experiences
- Understanding the effect of body condition on reproductive performance
- Understanding the optimal feeding strategy for the young breeding sow

Although the group agreed gilt management was important, they weren't sure what this meant! They also admitted that they didn't body condition score sows, as they were unsure how it should be done and why they should do it. Maintaining optimum condition within the breeding herd throughout the sow's lifetime will help reproductive performance and production efficiency.

Other areas of uncertainty included feed intake during lactation, addressing rapid loss of condition and 'skip-a-heat' to build condition and service strategy when young sows often display shorter and less strong heats. For more information about condition scoring check out BPEX *Action for Productivity 20* on this topic which can be downloaded from the website.

